

THE ROLE OF CITIES IN NATION-BUILDING PROCESS: THE OSH EXAMPLE

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Introduction

Following the end of the medieval era, feudalism collapsed, and modern nation-states emerged on international stages. The Treaty of Westphalia is a milestone for nation-states. While communities formed their nation-states, they used different tools such as myths, memories, traditions. One of the states that build their national identity is Kyrgyzstan. Although the history of Kyrgyzstan dates back to very ancient times, its existence as an official state began in the period of the Soviet Union.

After dissolution of the USSR, the countries which gained their independence had to build their national identity. For that reason, they needed to use some unique values to form their nation-states. Kyrgyzstan, which has a multiethnic society, required balanced policies to avoid conflict between different nationalities. Therefore, at the beginning of their independence, the country's policies addressed all people who lived within the Kyrgyzstan's territory. However, after a while, the steps taken by the elites tended to become more ethno-centric. One of the steps to build their national identity was to highlight the history of the city of Osh. The elites of the country instrumentalized the city and the importance given to it is strengthened by the laws.

The Concept of Nation, Nationalism and Nation-Building

There are several definitions of what a nation and a nationalism are. Due to the fact that the origins of notion of nation and nationalism are tracked in distinctive historical periods, scholars do not have a common definition. The widely accepted opinion is that nationalism emerged after the French Revolution, American Revolution and Industrial Revolution. In other words, it appeared in the 18th century with modernity. Although it is commonly accepted that the concept of nation and nationalism are products of modernity, it would be incomplete to separate ethnic bonds from these concepts. One of the concepts that appeared with modernity is the nation-state. Feudalism, which dominated during Medieval Era,

collapsed with modernity and following the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the notion of the nation-state emerged on international platforms. The factors that form the nation-state as a political unity are the notion of nation and nationalism.

The meaning of nation is a human community that lives in a recognized homeland, shares common myths and history, possesses a different public culture, and has common laws and customs for all members of the society [1, p. 13]. Briefly, it may be said that the concept of nation refers to a group of people who come together around shared values in well-defined territory. From an ethno-symbolic perspective, shared values such as myths, history, and memories are essential to form national identity.

The concept of nationalism can be understood in different ways. It can refer to: the entire process of creating and sustaining nations or nation-states, the sense of being part of the nation, along with feelings and desires for its safety and well-being, nation's language and symbols and its significance, an ideology, encompassing a cultural principle of nations, the national desires and guidelines for achieving national aims and desires, a social and political action to succeed the aims of nations and fulfill its national desires [2, p. 72]. According to many scholars, nationalism as both a movement and an ideology traced back to the 18th century. They support that the nation is completely a product of the modern era [2, p. 44]. Nationalism, which emerged in the 18th century, was initially thought of as elitist ideology. Afterward, it served to bourgeoisie and finally, it was used to motivate people in their fight for dependence. It may be said that for that reason, nationalism has been able to survive for centuries owing to its adaptation to different socio-economic conditions [16, p. 661]. Another definition is that nationalism is an ideological movement in order to obtain and sustain autonomy, unity and moreover identity for a group of people whom some of its members believe to form an actual or potential nation [1, p. 9].

Nationalists and others believe that the state is a universal organization of human society. Some ear-

ly political theories even turned this into a principle, and it is said that a society is unable to exist without order, order cannot exist without enforcement, and enforcement cannot materialize without proper institutions (the state) [15, p. 6]. History does not create nations accidentally, rather nations are human creations formulated by vision and determination. For that reason, nation building is a result of intentional statecraft. Nation building is an endless process which evolves constantly and needs care and attention [3, p. 566]. In straightforward terms, nation building defines as an intentional and thoughtful effort to formulate collective identity with a nation by diverse and multiethnic societies [4, p. 139]. The meaning of nation building is creating a shared sense of aim, destiny and a shared vision of belonging. Thus, constructing both tangible and intangible bonds that connect political unity and provide it sense of meaning [3, p. 566].

Briefly, nations, which are the result of political efforts by political entity called the state, are stimulated by the discourse of nationalism. Even though ethnic bonds are eliminated from the foundation of nations, some communities seek to instrumentalize historical symbols to build their own nation-states.

The Brief History of Kyrgyzstan

The existence of Kyrgyz people dates to B.C. and the information regarding those people can be found especially in Chinese sources.

The earliest ancestors of Kyrgyz people, who are thought of Turkic origin, settled down the northeastern region of today's Mongolia. Thereafter, a few of their tribes moved to today's southern Siberia and inhabited along the Yenisey River where they dwelled from the 6th century to the 8th century. They expanded throughout today's Tuva region in Russian Federation, staying there until the rise of the Mongol Empire in the 13th century and after that they started to migrate south [5]. In the 17th century, Kyrgyz people dwelled in the territory that is currently Kyrgyzstan. In the beginning of 19th century, Kyrgyz society came under the control of the Uzbek Khanate of Kokand. Until 1876, Kyrgyz people were subject to this khanate. After the conquest of Russian Empire, they became part of this empire until 1917 [6]. After dissolution of Russian Empire, they became a part of the Soviet Union.

When they fell under the authority of the Soviet Union, they were unable to establish themselves as an independent national group [7]. When they were under Soviet control, they were called different names. Sinor and Allworth mention that in tsarist era the Kyrgyz people were wrongly referred as Kara-Kyrgyz to differentiate them from the Kazakhs whom the Russians identified Kirgiz to separate them from the Cossaks (Russian: Kazaky). An autonomous Kyrgyz oblast (region) was established within the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. Its status was changed to an autonomous republic in 1926. In 1936, it became a "full union republic", the Kirgiz Soviet Socialist Republic" [7]. Kyrgyzstan became a union republic until 1991.

Kyrgyzstan officially formulated by the Soviet Union's elites and it, as a part of the Soviet Union, maintained its existence until the collapse of the USSR. Before the USSR, Kyrgyzstan did not have any experiences regarding statehood. For that reason, after dissolution of the Union, it faced some challenges related to establishing its independent nation-state. Therefore, the elites of the country had to utilize unique values which belong to Kyrgyzstan. Thus, they referred to their past. As Denison notes new ethno-national narratives which include symbolic locations and traditions have been adopted within all post-soviet area, especially in Central Asia in order to support to formulate new nation-states that do not have any historical roots before the Soviet period, in some cases, lack geographical logic [8, p. 1167]. The Kyrgyz people who have very rich and ancient history could have a state relatively recently. The tradition of the Kyrgyz state was established under the control of the Soviet Union.

Nation Building in Kyrgyzstan After Independence

After being independent, they faced many problems. One of the issues was the lack of nation-state tradition. While Kyrgyzstan formulated its nation-state, it had to pay attention its multiethnic structure. For that reason, Wachtel notes that when Kyrgyzstan gained its independence in 1991, Askar Akayev who is the first president of the country, tried to avoid formulating a nation-state based on ethno-national features. Instead of this, he preferred to promote a liberal state based on citizenship, en-

compassed by the slogan “Kyrgyzstan - Our Shared Home (Kyrgyzstan—Nash obshchii dom) [9, p. 6].

Akayev’s government opted for a balanced language and nationality policy which focuses on civic identity. It guaranteed citizenship for people living within the territory of Kyrgyzstan and preserving multi-ethnic character of the state [10, p. 39]. Thanks to Akayev’s policy focused on civic nationalism, whole people dwelling in Kyrgyzstan would have equal rights within territory. Abazov supports that for government of Kyrgyzstan, harsh ethnocentric policies would be reason to intensify interethnic conflicts in multiethnic state. Because in 1991, the population density of native Kyrgyz was slightly more than half of the population total population [10, p. 39].

Since Kyrgyzstan became independent, the fundamental concern of Akayev has been maintaining civic harmony and ethnic peace. Yet this purpose could not be compatible with the nation-building process [11]. While the elites of the government supported the civic values, the decisions they made reflected that they were leaning towards ethnic nationalism. Abazov notes that the symbols that belonged to Kyrgyz cultural traditions were reintroduced by the government. The name of streets squares, public places, towns and cities were changed from Russian to Kyrgyz [10, p. 39]. It may be said that the balance shifted away from civic nationalism to ethnic nationalism even though they tried to avoid this issue. After Akayev’s period, the leaders who came into power preferred to focus on policies that promoted ethnic nationalism.

The creation of nation-states following the collapse of the Soviet Union was referred to by an increasing nationalist ideology which has reinforced over the past 20 years [12, p. 399].

The City of Osh

The city of Osh, which has very rich history, is by far the most important city for Kyrgyzstan. From the geographical perspective, it may be said that it is in the heart of Central Asia.

Osh, located at the end of Fergana Valley, on the border with Uzbekistan, is one of the most ancient and famous market town along the Silk Road. Its history is traced back over 3000 years. The city’s success as an ancient trade center is partly thanks to

its location along Kyrgyzstan’s border with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan [13]. The city is situated at an elevation of 3.300 feet (1.000 meters). The city was firstly mentioned in writings in the 9th century, and it was ruined by Mongols in the 13th century and afterward it was built again. In 15th century, prior to exploration of sea routes, it was vital post on the trade paths to China and moreover to India [14].

The government authorities, who were aware of the importance of the city, paid special attention to it. As a result, they used the city as one of the main tools in shaping the national identity of the country. Buyar notes that the government made a decision to celebrate the 3000-year history of the city in 2000 due to the fact that the city’s history dates back 3000 years [17, p. 23]. Moreover, due to the importance of the city, the Kyrgyz government decided its status by legislation. According to Kyrgyzstan constitution, it is said that Bishkek and Osh are the cities of republican importance, and their status are determined by law [18]. It may be said that by using the city as a fundamental instrument in nation-state building, they emphasized ethnic foundations of the country.

Conclusion

The notion of nation and nationalism is one of the most contentious subjects among scholars. Although modernity is widely accepted as the milestone in the origin of these concepts, some scholars argue that ethnic values cannot be separated from nations and nationalism. Some countries on the international platform leverage their rich histories to shape their national identity. One of those countries is Kyrgyzstan. Even though Kyrgyzstan’s history as a political entity, state, is quite recent, their history as an ethnic group traces back to the ancient times, B.C. Kyrgyz people existed under the control of Russian Empire, and later they became a part of the Soviet Union for approximately 70 years. During the Soviet period, the official Kyrgyz state with defined borders was created. Thus, they possessed a political entity, state, with the support of the USSR.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, 15 countries became independent, and they had to accomplish their nation- building process. Yet, while the elites of the country completing their nation- building process, they needed to utilize some unique values. One of these values is cities. The city of

Osh, located within the territory of Kyrgyzstan, has very ancient history. The city's origin dates back more than 3000 years. Various communities and tribes inhabited the city. Osh is very vital not only from an economic perspective but also from cultural and religious aspects. For that reason, it may be said that the city has an identity. When the government built the country's national identity, Osh is by far the most important instrument in shaping the Kyrgyzstan's national identity. Briefly, it is supported that cities are an essential part of the nation-building process, and they can be utilized by leaders of countries to achieve their purpose.

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ABSTRACT

Each independent state has its own unique national identity. It creates this identity by utilizing various tangible and intangible values. When specifically looking at Kyrgyzstan, although it has very ancient ethnic history, it is relatively a new formation as a state. Kyrgyzstan is a multi-ethnic country that began its nation-building process after 1991. The article investigates how Kyrgyzstan instrumentalized a city in its nation-building process and explores the importance of a city in its process. The city of Osh has specific importance for Kyrgyzstan. Generally, states emphasize more abstract values in the nation-building process. However, Kyrgyzstan attributed a special significance on the city which has a 3000-year history, made a law for it and instrumentalized the city for identity construction.

Key Words: Nation, Nationalism, Nation-Building, Kyrgyzstan, Osh.

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ŞƏHƏRLƏRİN ULUS İNŞASI PROSESİNDƏ ROLU: OŞ NÜMUNƏSİ

XÜLASƏ

Hər müstəqil dövlətin özünə məxsus bir milli kimliyi var. Bu kimliyi, sahib olduğu maddi və mənəvi müxtəlif dəyərləri istifadə edərək formalaşdırır. Qırğızıstanın xüsusilə etnik baxımdan olduqca qədim bir tarixə sahib olmasına baxmayaraq, dövlət olaraq çox yeni bir quruluşdur. Qırğızıstan 1991-ci ildən sonra millət quruculuğu prosesinə başlayan çoxetnikli bir ölkədir. Məqalə Qırğızıstanın millət quruculuğu prosesində bir şəhəri necə alət kimi istifadə etdiyini və bir şəhərin millət quruculuğu prosesindəki əhəmiyyətini araşdırır. Oş şəhəri, Qırğızıstan üçün xüsusi əhəmiyyətə malikdir. Ümumiyyətlə, dövlətlər millət quruculuğu prosesində daha abstrakt dəyərlərə diqqət yetirirlər. Lakin Qırğızıstan 3000 illik tarixi olan bir şəhərə xüsusi əhəmiyyət vermiş, onun üçün qanun qəbul etmiş və şəhəri kimlik quruculuğu prosesində bir vasitə kimi istifadə etmişdir.

Açar sözlər: *Ulus, Milliyyətçilik, Ulus İnşası, Qırğızıstan, Oş.*

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РОЛЬ ГОРОДОВ В ПРОЦЕССЕ ПОСТРОЕНИЯ НАЦИИ: ПРИМЕР ОШ РЕЗЮМЕ

Каждое независимое государство имеет свою уникальную национальную идентичность. Эту идентичность оно формирует, используя различные материальные и духовные ценности, которые ему принадлежат. Если рассматривать в контексте Кыргызстана, несмотря на то, что этнически эта страна имеет очень древнюю историю, как государство она является относительно новым образованием. Кыргызстан — многоэтническая страна, начавшая процесс строительства нации после 1991 года. Статья исследует,

как Кыргызстан использует город в процессе строительства нации и какую роль играет город в этом процессе. Город Ош имеет особое значение для Кыргызстана. Обычно государства акцентируют внимание на более абстрактных ценностях в процессе построения нации. Однако Кыргызстан придаёт особое значение городу с 3000-летней историей, принимает закон, который делает его важным элементом в процессе построения национальной идентичности.

Ключевые слова: *Нация, Национализм, Строительство нации, Кыргызстан, Ош.*